

February 9, 2026

Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
145 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 565 County Boards of Education - Elections - District Voting (Fair Representation Act)

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Members:

Ranked Choice Voting Maryland (RCV Maryland) is committed to ensuring fair and representative elections for all Marylanders. Across the United States, winner-take-all, first-past-the-post elections often have non-majoritarian outcomes and can disenfranchise electoral communities - particularly voters of color.

The Campaign Legal Center (CLC) notes that at-large elections “can silence communities of color and deprive them of an equal opportunity to participate in the political process.”¹ The CLC along with other voting and civil rights groups have routinely recommended fair representation voting methods to address disparities and nonmajority outcomes.

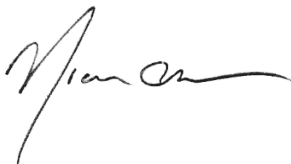
We recognize the goal of HB 565 is to ensure that voters within a district elect a representative of their choice. In order to allow for communities to be flexible in their ability to create fair representation, we strongly recommend the following options:

- **Option 1:** Remove “plurality of votes cast” and replace it with “majority of votes cast”
- **Option 2:** Remove “plurality of votes cast” and replace the language with “a fair voting method”

Option 1 would require a majority but may require an additional process if no candidate receives a majority of the vote. Option two would allow the respective jurisdiction to use a fair voting method of their choice that would create a more representative outcome based on vote shares.

We applaud the bill sponsor’s efforts to improve representation and welcome an opportunity to work on any necessary amendments.

Sincerely,



Michelle C. Whittaker
Executive Director
Ranked Choice Voting Maryland

¹ “What Is an At-Large Election?” (June 2024) <https://campaignlegal.org/update/what-large-election>